

**Hearing on
Metropolitan Police Department Performance
in FY 2004 and FY 2005**

**Committee on the Judiciary
Phil Mendelson, Chair
Council of the District of Columbia**



**Testimony of Charles H. Ramsey
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Good afternoon, Chairperson Mendelson, other members of the Committee, staff and guests. I am pleased to be here today to discuss the Metropolitan Police Department's performance over the past year ... because I believe our Department's performance over the past year has been exemplary. In our key performance areas – and, in particular, in the critical area of crime reduction – the MPD has made tremendous progress in making the District of Columbia a safer and more livable city. I am not here today declaring victory; we still have a long way to go to achieve our goals in public safety. But I can say, with both confidence and pride, that our Department made significant strides during 2004, and that these trends are continuing into 2005.

Many of the details behind our success are outlined in my prepared statement, which is also posted on the Police Department's website, www.mpd.dc.gov. But before I get into the various facts and figures, I do want to make one very important point: the credit for our success over the past year goes primarily to two groups of people. First are the hard-working and dedicated men and women of the Metropolitan Police Department. Our sworn and civilian employees have worked tirelessly over the past year to make our city safer, and I want to publicly thank our employees for their efforts. Second, I want to acknowledge our partners in the community and in the rest of city government. You have heeded the call that public safety truly is "everyone's business," and you have responded with the creativity and tenacity that are the hallmarks of our great city and its great residents.

So while the MPD is represented today by me and by members of my senior Command Staff, I want everyone to recognize that it is our employees and our partners in the community who are the real driving forces behind the good news on crime and public safety that I am able to report on today.

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And the news on crime is very good and encouraging. According to preliminary statistics, DC experienced an 11.5 percent reduction in serious crime in calendar year 2004. This followed a nearly 9 percent drop in crime between 2002 and 2003. Last year, there were reductions in every major crime category and in each of the seven police districts. The 20 percent drop in homicides has received the most attention – the District ended the year with fewer than 200 homicides for the first time since 1986. And that trend has continued into 2005, as homicides are down another 20 percent from this time last year.

But homicide is by no means the only crime that has been declining. I am also encouraged by reductions in the other crime types, including sexual assaults, aggravated assaults and auto thefts, to name a few. And I am encouraged by where those reductions are occurring. Take auto theft in the Sixth District: after increasing sharply in recent years, the number of vehicles stolen in 6D declined by 28 percent last year, according to the preliminary data, and auto thefts in 6D are down another 58 percent so far this year. These reductions have been the result of a focused effort by police and community to combat the problem, in particular the problem of juvenile car theft.

Today, the Metropolitan Police Department is more focused on fighting crime than we have been in many years – and that focus on crime-fighting is producing results in our neighborhoods. This focus is reflected at every level of the organization. For top management, it is found in our daily Crime Briefings, where we map and analyze the most current crime patterns and deploy our resources accordingly, as well as in our management of special initiatives such as the "hot spots," which I will

discuss later. For middle managers, the renewed focus on crime is reflected in our PSA Plans, through the district-level Crime Briefings that we have recently begun and through other accountability and performance measures. And for the men and women on the front lines, the new focus on crime-fighting is reflected in their enhanced productivity in both enforcement and community policing activities.

During 2004, MPD officers arrested 49,599 suspects, an increase of 6,300 arrests – or 15 percent – from the 2003 total. The number of juveniles arrested increased by 17 percent, and the number of juveniles arrested for violent crimes increased 32 percent last year. As I reported during the Committee’s recent hearing on juvenile homicides, our curfew and truancy enforcement efforts have increased substantially as well. In the first several months this school year alone, the MPD has picked up about twice as many truants as we did in all of the 2003-2004 school year.

So we have clearly stepped up our enforcement efforts targeting both adults and juveniles. In 2004, the MPD maintained a 60 percent homicide closure rate, and our detectives solved a number of major cases, including the triple homicide inside Colonel Brooks Tavern; the tragic homicides of Chelsea Cromartie, Myesha Lowe, Princess Hansen and other juveniles; as well as the regional serial bank robbery case. Our closure rates are still not where I would like them to be, and I have challenged our detectives to do more during 2005. But we  substantially increased our focused law enforcement efforts, as measured by arrest activity.

Officers are also removing more firearms from our streets and homes. During 2004, the number of firearms recoveries exceeded 2,000 for the first time in several years. And through the first two months of 2005, firearm recoveries are already tracking 30 percent higher than last year’s total.

These broad enforcement efforts have been complemented by a number of specialized enforcement projects. Probably the most significant of these has been the “hot spot” initiative, created by Mayor Williams to combat crime and violence in some of DC’s most challenged neighborhoods. Under the leadership of City Administrator Robert Bobb, the hot spot initiative has brought together all of city government to address the conditions that can lead to crime in these communities. February 1 marked the one-year anniversary of the 14 original hot spots, and the results have been even more dramatic than in the city as a whole. Each of the 14 hot spots experienced a reduction in violent crime over the past year. In the 14 areas combined, violent crime declined by 34 percent and total crime by 22 percent – both outpacing the citywide reductions we experienced in these categories. With this experience in hand, the city recently announced changes to the hot spot initiative for the second year of the program, including several new hot spots and adjustments to the boundaries of some existing ones. We look forward to continued success in the months ahead.

The same type of interagency coordination can be found in many of the other crime-fighting initiatives we launched or expanded over the past year. Let me mention just a few examples. Regular “Operation Fight Backs” are bringing together city agencies to combat the “broken windows” problems in communities in all seven districts – making sure that warrants are served, abandoned autos are towed, vacant lots are cleaned up and other conditions are addressed. Project Safe Neighborhoods (which I discussed during the juvenile homicide hearing) has also yielded impressive results in reducing crime and gun violence in the Sursum Corda community. This approach has now been expanded to two additional targeted areas in the Seventh District. And our Gang Intervention

Partnership in Columbia Heights and other parts of Northwest has continued to show success in controlling the violence associated with some of our Latino street gangs.

Finally, over the past year, we have expanded our neighborhood partnership and systemic prevention efforts. Along with focused law enforcement, these are the pillars of our “Policing for Prevention” strategy of community policing.

In May 2004, we successfully rolled out the new Police Service Area boundaries, following an extended process of community dialogue, research and analysis. Almost a year later, I continue to believe that the new boundaries have put us in a stronger position to fight crime and successfully engage the community in community policing. I am especially pleased that the new PSA structure has given our districts the flexibility to combat specialized neighborhood crime problems, such as auto theft in the Sixth District, without taking away from the resources needed to answer calls for service and patrol our neighborhoods. Over the past year, the MPD has closely monitored the operations of the new PSA boundaries, and we have made some adjustments, including adding a seventh PSA to the Sixth District. We will continue to monitor and evaluate the new PSA structure, and will report back to the Committee and the Council.

The new PSA structure also provided an opportunity to put new leadership in many PSAs and to renew our emphasis on PSA meetings, PSA Action Plans and other elements of our strategy. In many cases, PSAs have expanded or created community-based resources – everything from citizen patrols to electronic “listservs” – to support their community policing efforts. And every police district has also initiated regular youth initiatives to provide young people in our communities with positive prevention activities and resources.

The bottom line is that over the past year, we have been successful in reducing crime and making our neighborhoods safer through a combination of strategies – enforcement, partnerships and prevention. And we will continue to follow this three-part strategy in 2005 and beyond.

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Restructuring the PSAs was an important organizational change of the past year, but it was by no means the only significant change we made. Over the past year, we continued to place a high priority on putting more officers on the street to support our crime-fighting efforts.

In September 2004, we reached our goal of 3,800 sworn members, and we have remained very close to that level in the ensuing months. We have also begun to implement the civilianization program that the Council included in our FY2005 budget. This involves hiring qualified civilian employees to take over a number of critical functions currently performed by sworn members.

We have continued to make progress in reducing the number of sworn members who are unavailable for full duty because of extended sick leave or limited duty status. Compared with a year ago, we have cut the number of officers unavailable for full duty by 19 percent, meaning that we have 62 more full-duty officers today than we did a year ago. These improvements have been the result of new protocols to monitor and evaluate sick leave and limited duty status, and better management of these cases. We look forward to even more progress in the future, with full implementation of the

provisions of the Omnibus bill approved last year by the Council. I recognize that some officers will always be sick or injured, and we must take care of those members and work to bring them back to full-duty status as best we can. But I also know that we can do an even better job of managing these cases and ensuring that we have more of our sworn members where they need to be: out on the streets fighting crime.

Other organizational improvements over the past year have included the successful transfer of 9-1-1 and 3-1-1 responsibilities to the new Office of Unified Communications, and the creation of a new School Security Division to help plan and oversee the transfer of school safety responsibility to the MPD later this year. In anticipation of this move, we have substantially increased the number of Resource Officers in our schools to 99 and the number of supervisors to 14. We also got our new Family Liaison Specialist Unit up and running this past year. It is providing critical support and referrals to the survivors of homicide victims in the District.

In just the last few weeks, we successfully negotiated a new contract with the Fraternal Order of Police – an agreement that will justly compensate our members for their hard work and performance, and will also keep our Department in a very competitive position when it comes to recruiting new members in what is an increasingly competitive market for law enforcement professionals. Over the past year, we initiated new training opportunities for our members, including an exciting new partnership with George Washington University that is providing our members with access to college courses, and college degrees, at a significantly reduced cost. We have also continued our regular program of promotional opportunities for sworn members. And we have opened a new firing range and driving course at the training facility in Cheltenham, Maryland, that we share with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and other federal agencies.

Organizationally, I believe our Department is in excellent shape to continue building upon the gains of the last few years.

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There are a number of other performance-related issues that I will not be able to cover in depth in my testimony today, but that I do want to mention briefly. For example, our Department has continued to make significant progress in the areas of emergency preparedness and homeland security. These include advancements in training, technology and tactics, including the continued development of our Special Threat Action Teams and the recent launch of Operation TIPP – the Terrorist Incident Prevention Program, which is enlisting the support of the business community in detecting and preventing terrorism.

Our Department also successfully managed a number of major events over the past year, including the dedication of the World War II Memorial, the state funeral for President Reagan, the January Inauguration and several Orange Alerts. The MPD has become so adept at handling these types of events that they hardly seem extraordinary. But there is an awful lot of planning and coordination that go into these events, and our Department continued to excel.

As I reported last month in the hearing on automated traffic enforcement, the news on traffic safety is good as well. Traffic fatalities in DC declined 35 percent last year, to their lowest level in at least

18 years. Fatalities in which speeding was the primary contributing factor have declined 55 percent since 2001, when we first introduced our photo radar speeding reduction program. And our Department continues to concentrate resources – both technological and human – on such traffic safety priorities as aggressive driving, drunk driving, and seat belt and child safety seat compliance, as part of a coordinated effort to make our streets safer for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and others.

Finally, I am pleased to report that customer satisfaction with the MPD remains quite high. As part of the “Biased Policing Project,” the independent, DC-based Police Foundation conducted a survey that measured DC residents’ attitudes about police performance, officer demeanor and integrity, and possible bias in the delivery of police services. The results were released in December. The survey found that DC residents are generally quite satisfied with the performance of our department and the demeanor and integrity of our officers. Seventy-one percent of respondents felt that MPD officers do a good job of preventing crime in their neighborhoods, 77 percent agreed that officers care about problems in their neighborhoods, and 85 percent felt that MPD officers are either “very” or “somewhat” honest. Among respondents who had called the MPD to report a problem, 81 percent were satisfied with police response time, 92 percent said the MPD officer was either “polite” or “very polite,” and 90 percent said the officer displayed a professional manner.

The good news from this survey is that the community seems to recognize and appreciate our efforts at crime-fighting and partnership building. And the strong support we enjoy from the community today bodes well for even more extensive and collaborative community policing efforts in the future.

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My testimony this afternoon has obviously touched on the highlights of what I believe has been a very successful year for the Metropolitan Police Department. That is not to suggest that there are no problems or challenges facing the MPD. There are – not the least of which are the continuing problems of youth violence and street crime in many of our neighborhoods. But I sincerely believe that our Department and our city are in a much better and stronger position today to fight crime and enhance neighborhood safety than we were a year ago. And I am confident that one year from now, with the support of this Committee, we will be in an even stronger position still – thanks to the hard word and dedication of our employees and our partners in the community.

Thank you again for the opportunity to read this statement into the record. My staff and I will be happy to answer your questions.